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# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

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## SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES<sup>1</sup> HISTORICAL SKETCH

[Some knowledge of the course of development through which our secondary education has passed is necessary to a fair understanding of the problems of secondary education in the present time. The following outline is intended in some small degree to meet this need. It has been prepared especially for the use of students in my university classes in pedagogy, who for the most part are preparing to teach in high schools. I have made such use as I might of original sources of information, especially for the purposes of verification and correction; but for the greater part of the work the original documents have not been accessible to me, and I have had to depend on secondary authorities. The bibliography already published in the *SCHOOL REVIEW* will present some idea of the available literature of the subject and will indicate the general scope of the authorities that have been consulted.]

The term "secondary education" may be taken in general to denote education of a grade higher than that of the elementary schools and lower than that of institutions authorized to give academic degrees. This definition is not by any means exact, but it will answer the present purpose. We find occasionally secondary schools which take young pupils through the first steps of reading, writing, and arithmetic. On the other hand, we have seen institutions authorized to give degrees, and actually giving degrees, when their courses were hardly sufficient to fit their graduates for admission to the best degree-giving institutions. All such instances as these must be regarded as variations from the

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type and not as themselves determining the type. The definition proposed is inexact for another reason. The standards of one generation differ from those of earlier and later generations. There are doubtless academies of the present day which give a more complete course of instruction than did the leading colleges of a century ago. On the other hand there has been a marked tendency within the past century to extend the scope of elementary instruction. It happens that in one school the studies commonly pursued in secondary schools are begun two or three years earlier than in some neighboring institution where the pupils' progress in the work assigned them is equally rapid. This is not the place to discuss the intrinsic differences between elementary studies and secondary studies. Attention is called simply to the difficulty of making a universally valid distinction, resulting from the fact that historically the two grades are found repeatedly overlapping.

The fact that the secondary schools have occupied an intermediate position in the general scheme of education renders it especially difficult to trace the history of such schools. At one time and place a school of this grade has been maintained as a mere necessary feeder to a college. Under different circumstances a school of similar grade has grown up by degrees as a gradual extension of an elementary school. The elementary work which the secondary school presupposes has been done at one time in a preparatory department of the school itself; at another time in an independent elementary school; in still other cases, under private tutors. And not unfrequently the place of the secondary school itself has been supplied by private instruction, and pupils have gone directly from the care of a private tutor to enter upon a college course.

The history of secondary education in this country may be roughly divided into three periods: (1) The grammar school period, extending from the early days of colonization to the Revolutionary War; (2) the academy period, extending from the Revolution to the time of the educational revival, say in the forties of the present century; and (3) the high school period, cover-

ing the past half-century or thereabouts. It hardly need be added that no sharp lines can be drawn between these different periods. At the present time the existing academies cannot be said to be in a state of decline. There are, moreover, a few schools which have come down to us from the earliest period of our educational history, and some of these still bear the name of "grammar school;" but their courses of study have been more or less modernized.

It will be seen from the chronology of this outline that our first division has to do with the thirteen original colonies; the second is concerned mainly with states east of the Mississippi; and the third extends to the whole Union. It is only the old states of the Atlantic seaboard that have passed through all three of the phases of secondary education enumerated above.

#### I. THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL PERIOD

The character of the early colonial schools was largely determined by that of the schools with which the colonists had been familiar in the Old World. In the seventeenth century a single type of secondary school prevailed in all the leading countries of Europe. This was a Latin school, the direct descendant of the monastic and cathedral schools of the Middle Ages, but enriched by the literary influences of the Renaissance. In England this type was represented by the old "grammar schools."

Perhaps the most representative of the English grammar schools was that founded by John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, London, of which the historian Green has said, "The grammar schools of Edward the Sixth and of Elizabeth—in a word, the system of middle-class education which, by the close of the [sixteenth] century, had changed the very face of England, were the outcome of Colet's foundation of St. Paul's."

One chief reason for this preëminence of St. Paul's may be found in the fact that it was the first school established in accordance with the ideas of the New Learning—it was the first to enjoy to the full that enrichment which came from the literary

influences of the Renaissance. As to its early history we have, fortunately, a fair measure of information.<sup>1</sup>

It was just at the beginning of the reign of Henry the Eighth that Colet entered upon the establishment of this school. He erected buildings for the use of the school and its masters in St. Paul's churchyard and added an endowment that was liberal for the time, all from the private fortune left to him by his father. He placed the administration of this trust in the hands of the Master, Wardens, and Assistants of the Company of Mercers, the City of London guild to which his father had belonged. The statutes drawn up for the school by Colet in 1512<sup>2</sup> provided that "There shall be taught in the Scole, *Children of all Nations and Contres indifferently*, to the number of One Hundred and Fifty-three, according to the number of Seates in the Scole." It was from the outset a day school and not a boarding school. The number of children to be admitted is thought to have been chosen with reference to the miracle of the fishes (John 21: 11). The school was dedicated to the child Jesus. "Over the master's chair," says Erasmus, "is an image of the child Jesus, of admirable work, in the gesture of teaching, whom all the boys, going and coming, salute with a short hymn; and there is a representation of God the Father, saying, *Hear ye him*, these words being written at my suggestion."

The admission of children was subject to the following rules:

If your chylde can read and wryte Latyn and Englyshe suffycyently, so that he be able to rede and wryte his own lessons, then he shal be admitted into the schole for a scholar.

If your chylde, after reasonable season proved be founde here unapte and unable to lernynge, than ye warned therof shal take hym awaye, that he occupye not oure rowme in vayne.

<sup>1</sup> I have not had access to the *Life of Colet* by DR. SAMUEL KNIGHT, published in 1724, nor to that of LUPTON (1887); but somewhat extended extracts from the former appear in BARNARD'S *American Journal of Education*, Vol. XVI. SEEBOHM'S *The Oxford Reformers* (London, 1869, 2d ed.) is a very interesting account of the relations of Colet, Erasmus, and More. The account of St. Paul's School in STAUNTON'S *The Great Schools of England* (London, 1869) contains citations from original documents relating to the early history of the foundation.

<sup>2</sup> With reference to this date, see STAUNTON, *op. cit.*, p. 148, footnote.

If he be apte to lerne, ye shal be contente that he continue here tyl he have competent literature.

If he absente VI dayes, and in that mean seeson ye show not cause reasonable, (reesonable cause is only sekenes) than his rowme to be voyde, without he be admitted agayne, and pay iiii d.

Also after cause shewed, if he continewe to absente tyl the weke of admision in the next quarter, and then ye shew not the contenuance of the sekenes, then his rowme to be voyde, and he none of the schole tyl he be admytted agayne, and paye iiii d. for wryting his name.

Also if he fall thryse into absence, he shal be admitted no more.

Your chylde shal, on Chyldermas daye, wayte vpon the boy byshop at Powles, and offer there.

Also ye shal fynde him waxe in winter.

Also ye shal fynde him convenient books to his lernynge.

If the offerer be content with these articles, than let his childe be admytted.

Further regulations for the school show in its founder a fine mingling of the devout churchman, the humanist, and the warm-hearted friend of children. The "Statutes" begin with these words : "JOHN COLLETT, THE SONNE OF HENRY COLLETT, DEAN OF PAULES, desiring nothing more thanne education and bringing uppe of Children in good maners and literature, in the yere of our Lorde One Thousand fyve hundredth and twelfe, bylded a Schole in the Estende of Paule's Churche, of One Hundred and Fifty-three to be taught *fre* in the same." The purpose of the school is thus simply and broadly stated. The course of study is likewise prescribed in very broad and general terms. The passage reads as follows :

#### *What shall be Taught*

As touching in this Scole what shall be taught of the Maisters, and learned of the Scolers, it passeth my witte to devyse and determine in particular, but in general to speak and sumewhat to saye my mynde, I would they were taught always in good literature bothe Laten and Greke, and good autors such as have the *verye Romayne* eloquence joynd with wisdom, specially Christen autors, that wrote their wisdome with clean and chaste Laten, other in verse or in prose, for my intent is by this Scole specially to increase knowledge and worshippinge of God and Our Lord Christ Jesu, and good Christen life and manners in the Children.

And for that entent I will the Children learne first above all the *Catechizion* in Englishe, and after the *Accidens* that I made, or some other

yf any be better to the purpose, to induce Children more spedely to Laten speeche. And than *Institutum Christiani Hominis*, which that learned Erasmus made at my requeste, and the boke called *Copia* of the same Erasmus. And than other authors Christian, as *Lactantius*, *Prudentius*, and *Proba*, and *Sedulius*, and *Juvencus*, and *Baptista Mantuanus*, and suche other as shall be thought convenient and most to purpose unto the true Laten speeche. All *Barbary*, all corruption, all Laten adulterate which ignorant blinde foles brought into this worlde, and with the same hath dystained and poysoned the old Laten speeche, and the veraye *Romayne* tongue, which in the tyme of *Tully*, and *Salust*, and *Virgell*, and *Terence*, was usid, whiche also Sainte *Jerome*, and Sainte *Ambrose*, and Sainte *Austen*, and many holy doctors lerned in theyre tymes. I saye that fylthiness and all suche abusion whiche the later blynde worlde brought in, whiche more rather may be called *Blotterature* than *Literature*, I utterly abannyshe and exclude out of this Scole, and charge the Maisters that they teche always that is beste, and instruct the Children in Greke and Laten, in redyng unto them suche autors that hathe with wisdome joyned the pure chaste Eloquence.

Provision was made for a “Hyghe Maister,” who “in doctrine, learnynge, and teachinge, shall direct all the Scole.” “A man hoole in body, honest, and vertuous, and lerned in good and cleane Laten literature, and also in Greke, yf such may be gotten; a Wedded man, a Single man, or a Preste that hath no benefice with cure, nor benefice that may lett the due besinesse in the Scole.” There was to be also a “Surmaister,” and in case of a vacancy in the position of high master, he was to have the preference for that place. Finally, the school was to have a “Chapelyn” who should “attende allonly uppon the Scole.” The special religious services prescribed for the school were not onerous. In addition to the conduct of these services, the chaplain “shall teache the children the Catechyzon and Instruction of the Articles of the Faythe, and the Ten Commandments in *Inglishe*.”

William Lilly, well known as the author of *Lilly's Grammar*, was the first master of the school. After serving in that capacity for ten years, he was succeeded in regular order by the sub-master, John Ritwyse. The securing of a suitable sub-master in the first instance was to Colet a matter of serious consideration, and became the subject of highly interesting correspondence

between himself and Erasmus. The account which Erasmus gives, in this connection, of a discussion which he had with a Cambridge don regarding the dignity and usefulness of the teacher's calling is highly edifying. Colet would gladly have made Erasmus master of his school; and expressed the hope that he would at least "give us a helping hand in teaching our teachers."<sup>1</sup>

It has been commonly stated that the discipline in Colet's school during the life of the Dean was harsh in the extreme. Later writers have shown that this view is without historical foundation. On the other hand there is evidence of a very pleasing sort that the founder felt great tenderness for the boys of his school. One illustration may be taken from his "*lytell proheme*" to the Latin grammar prepared for the boys of St. Paul's, "In which," he says, "if any new things be of me, it is alone that I have put these 'parts' in a more clear order, and I have made them a little more easy to young wits, than (methinketh) they were before: judging that nothing may be too soft, nor too familiar for little children, specially learning a tongue unto them all strange. In which little book I have left many things out of purpose, considering the tenderness and small capacity of little minds. . . . Wherefore I pray you, all little babes, all little children, learn gladly this little treatise, and commend it diligently unto your memories, trusting of this beginning that ye shall proceed and grow to perfect literature, and come at the last to be *great clerks*. *And lift up your little white hands for me*, which prayeth for you to God, to whom be all honour and imperial majesty and glory. Amen."<sup>2</sup>

Whatever may have been the actual practice in the early discipline of St. Paul's, it would be too much to claim that the English grammar schools generally were ruled in mildness. Quite the reverse was admittedly the case.

It has seemed worth while to devote some little space to the

<sup>1</sup> See SEEBOHM, *op. cit.*, 217-21.

<sup>2</sup> SEEBOHM, *op.cit.*, pp. 213, 214. See further with reference to this grammar, HAZLITT, *Schools, Schoolbooks, and Schoolmasters*, London, 1888; chapter viii.

early history of this school. It opened a new era in secondary education in England, and so prepared the way for the early education of the English colonies in America. Moreover, that most famous of the Paulines, John Milton, wrote the *Tractate on education*, to which some would ascribe the origin of our later American academies.

A well-defined system of Latin schools arose in Europe during this same sixteenth century, under the direction of the Jesuits. We have a full account of this system from a friendly hand in the Rev. Thomas Hughes' *Loyola and the educational system of the Jesuits*.<sup>1</sup> The thoroughness of their instruction, especially in Latin, the extended preparation required of their teachers, and the mildness of their discipline, gave to these schools great and long-continued popularity. Their influence was not felt, however, in the education of the colonies which grew into the United States, until a later period than that which we now have under consideration. By the time that strong Jesuit colleges were established here, American education had assumed such well-defined form and direction that it was not influenced in any general way by the new institutions.

The fathers of our early colonies had doubtless many of them been educated in these European Latin schools. William Penn received his early schooling at the Chigwell Free Grammar School. Theophilus Eaton and John Davenport were schoolmates in the Coventry Free Grammar School. Edward Hopkins had been a scholar in the Royal Free Grammar School in Shrewsbury. Roger Williams went to Pembroke College, in Cambridge, from the Charter House.

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<sup>1</sup> New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892. (The Great Educators series.)

(To be continued.)